

John Donne's Poetic Diction

Kentaro Kimura

要旨 本論文の目的は、イギリスを代表する詩人の一人であるジョン・ダン (John Donne) の語彙に関する傾向を分析することである。そのために語彙構成を語源的観点から分類することが主な作業となる。英語語彙の歴史的特性は、ゲルマン系語彙の基礎の上に、古典語系の語彙が大きく重なり重層性をなしていることにある。この二重構造の語彙の使用法が、ダンにおいてどのような表現上の効果を示しているかを分析した。

調査の方法として、いくつか重要な作品を選択し、それぞれの詩における単語の語源の数を調べ、その比率求めた。調査の結果、一般的な語彙の傾向において、ダンは古典語系の言葉を多く用いるがあること、又、各々の詩により比率が大きく異なることが明らかとなった。ゲルマン語系の言葉が多用される「Break of Day」、反対に古典語系の言葉が多用される「Holy Sonnet 9」などの詩を分析することにより、彼が詩の内容に適応させ語彙と文体を変化させていることが示される。

彼は言葉の特徴を語源に関わらず最大限に利用することに興味を持ち、彼の詩における独特の特徴であるコンシートの詩的效果を生み出すために、言葉の特徴を十分に吟味し、選択しているのである。

1. Introduction

John Donne (1572-1632) is one of the major English poets and the leading poet of the so called “the metaphysical poets”, who “about the beginning of the seventeen century appeared a race of writers that may be termed the metaphysical poets.”(qtd. in Gardner xix) This paper treats the nature of the poetic diction of Donne—i.e. to examine the nature of Donne’s vocabulary in relation to etymology. For diction is one of the most important foundations for poets to compose poetry. Donne, Shakespeare, Milton and Hopkins have different vocabularies. Naturally, the language of Donne’s poetry is so tightly fused with his poetry that it is impossible to separate them from each other. When we understand the nature of his diction, we can understand his poetry more deeply.

The English language is classified as a Germanic language. Its basic grammatical structure is similar to that of German, the mother of English. The Germanic languages are a linguistic group including such languages as German, Dutch, Frisian, Danish, Swedish, Norwegian, English and many others. “All these languages are descended from one parent language, a dialect of Indo-European, which we can call Proto-Germanic.”(Barber 81) In Germanic languages, many words are of common etymology. The English vocabulary has a great number of loaned words from Romance languages, especially Latin and Greek.

Many words are derived from them directly; but a greater number of them entered into English through French. There are a few words come from other Romance languages. For instance, *breeze* came from Spanish and *alarm* from Italian. In this way English has borrowed words from these foreign languages throughout its history; the vocabulary of English owes much to them. Consequently the English language has come to consist mainly of two levels of words which are basically identical in meaning in the history of making of English; one level of words are derived from Germanic languages and the other from Romance languages. *Deep*, for instance, is derived from German, and *profound* from Latin, both of which have basically the same meaning. A poet can choose between words of Romance origin and those of Germanic origin according to his purpose; he chooses them carefully for his poetry.

The main topic of this paper is the poetic diction of Donne. A close examination is expected to reveal the characteristic of his diction, especially words of which origin--German or Romance-- he prefers in his works. The method of research is to examine the ratio of the content words and analyze those -- i.e. "main verbs, adverbs, nouns, adjectives, demonstrative pronouns, and others" (Gimson 261)-- derived from such languages as German, Old English, Middle English, Old Norse, Latin, Old French, and Greek. These seven languages are classified into two groups: Classical (Latin, Old French, and Greek) and Germanic (German, Old English, Middle English, and Old North).

For the examination of Donne's diction a number of his most important works have been selected, because they are considered to show the characteristic of his diction. Although words derived from other languages than those mentioned above--languages such as Italian, Spanish, Sanskrit, Celtic, Avestan, Dutch, Flemish, Hebrew -- appear in his poetry, they are such rare words that I have not included in the ratios. Since comparison is one of the most effective ways to illustrate the characteristic of Donne's diction, he will be compared with such major poets as Shakespeare, Milton, John Keats and G. M. Hopkins.

2. The Result of Examination

To examine Donne's diction, the following poems are chosen: "Loves Alchymie", "The Canonization", "Breake of Day", "Aire and Angels", "A Valediction: of weeping", "The Flea", Holy Sonnets, 2, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10 and 14, and "Hymn to God my God, in my sickness".

The following is the result of examination:

1. "Loves Alchymie": the number of the words of Germanic origin is 43; that of Old English origin is 7; that of Middle English origin is 3; that of Old North origin is 2; that of Latin origin is 16; that of Old French origin is 4; and that of Greek origin is 4.

2. "The Canonization": the number of the words of Germanic origin is 61; that of Old English origin is 8; that of Middle English origin is 3; that of Latin origin is 46; that of Old French origin is 4; and that of Greek origin is 9.

3. "Breake of Day": the number of the words of Germanic origin is 32; that of Old English origin is 8; that of Old North origin is 1; that of Latin origin is 8; and that of Old French origin is 3.

4. "Aire and Angels": the number of the words of Germanic origin is 39; that of Old English origin is 12; that of Middle English origin is 1; that of Old North origin is 3, that of Latin origin is 19, and that of Greek origin is 6.

5. "A Valediction: of weeping": the number of the words of Germanic origin is 37; that of Old English origin is 11; that of Middle English origin is 1; that of Latin origin is 18; that of Old French origin is 1; and that of Greek origin is 4.

6. "The Flea": the number of the words of Germanic origin is 37; that of Old English origin is 5; that of Middle English origin is 3; that of Old North origin is 1; that of Latin origin is 23; that of Old French origin is 2; and that of Greek origin is 2.

7. "Holy Sonnet 2": the number of the words of Germanic origin is 17; that of Old English origin is 3; that of Middle English origin is 2; that of Latin origin is 13; that of Old French origin is 1; and that of Greek origin is 1.

8. "Holy Sonnet 4": the number of the words of Germanic origin is 27; that of Old English origin is 3; that of Middle English origin is 2; that of Old North origin is 1; that of Latin origin is 11; that of Old French origin is 2; and that of Greek origin is 1.

9. "Holy Sonnet 6": the number of the words of Germanic origin is 32; that of Old English origin is 9; that of Middle English origin is 2; that of Old North origin is 2; that of Latin origin is 13; that of Old French origin is 3; and that of Greek origin is 2.

10. "Holy Sonnet 7": the number of the words of Germanic origin is 26; that of Old English origin is 6; that of Middle English origin is 2; that of Old North origin is 1; that of Latin origin is 17; that of Old French origin is 2; and that of Greek origin is 2.

11. "Holy Sonnet 9": the number of the words of Germanic origin is 15; that of Old English origin is 6; that of Middle English origin is 1; that of Old North origin is 1; that of Latin origin is 16; that of Old French origin is 5; and that of Greek origin is 42.

12. "Holy Sonnet 10": the number of the words of Germanic origin is 26; that of Old English origin is 2; that of Middle English origin is 1; that of Old North origin is 1; that of Latin origin is 13; and that of Old French origin is 4.

13. "Holy Sonnet 14": the number of the words of Germanic origin is 25; that of Old English origin is 3; that of Middle English origin is 2; and that of Latin origin is 12; and that of Old French origin is 3.

14. "Holy Sonnet 17": the number of the words of Germanic origin is 33; that of Old English origin is 4; that of Latin origin is 12; and that of Greek origin are 2.

15. "Hymn to God my God, in my Sickness": the number of the words of Germanic origin is 42; that of Old English origin is 5, that of Middle English origin are 1, that of Old North origin 1; that of Latin

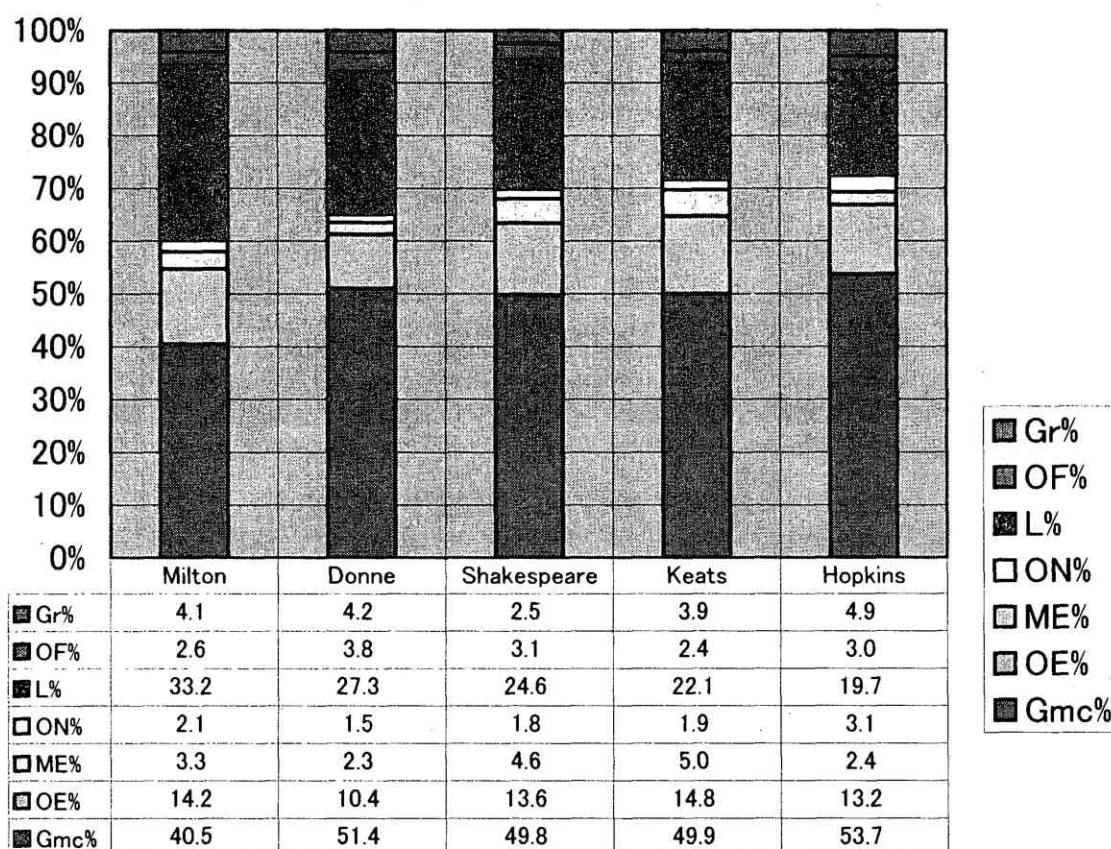
origin is 25; that of Old French origin is 2; and that of Greek origin is 5.

When we compare Donne with Shakespeare, Milton, Keats, and Hopkins, we have an interesting result. The rate of each origin is as follows:

	Gmc%	OE%	ME%	ON%	L%	OF%	Gr%
Milton	40.5	14.2	3.3	2.1	33.2	2.6	4.1
Paradise Lost Book 1, 1-126	50.0	11.3	1.0	1.9	30.2	2.8	2.8
Book 1, 242-270	43.4	14.7	8.5	2.3	26.4	2.3	2.3
Book 2, 244-262	32.9	17.1	1.3	1.3	38.2	3.9	5.3
Book 3, 372-389	32.9	13.7	4.1	2.7	38.4	2.7	5.5
Book 4, 776-787	41.0	21.3	0.0	1.6	29.5	3.3	3.3
Book 5, 308-320	40.0	25.0	5.0	3.3	26.7	0.0	0.0
Book 6, 56-78	34.0	16.0	0.0	1.1	41.5	2.1	5.3
Book 8, 153-167	37.9	19.7	3.0	1.5	33.3	3.0	1.5
Book 9, 1-47	28.6	10.4	4.7	4.7	38.5	5.2	7.8
Book 10, 720-746	45.1	13.7	3.9	2.9	31.4	0.0	2.9
Book 11, 500-514	48.4	7.8	4.6	0.0	37.5	0.0	1.5
Book 12, 624-649	54.8	10.4	1.7	0.9	25.2	1.7	5.2
Shakespeare	49.8	13.6	4.6	1.8	24.6	3.1	2.5
Hamlet	50.0	13.6	4.3	1.9	24.3	3.1	2.7
1-5, 9-91	50.6	11.7	3.3	1.8	25.6	3.0	3.9
3-1, 56-89	48.7	13.8	3.9	3.9	23.7	4.6	1.3
3-3, 36-98	50.0	15.7	5.6	1.0	23.1	2.4	2.1
Macbeth	49.3	13.4	5.6	1.5	25.4	3.0	1.9
1-5, 38-54	45.2	14.3	3.6	1.2	28.6	7.1	0.0
2-1, 33-64	51.4	13.2	5.9	1.5	25.0	1.5	1.5
5-5, 19-28	50.0	12.5	8.3	2.1	20.8	0.0	6.3
Keats	49.9	14.8	5.0	1.9	22.1	2.4	3.9
On First Looking into Chapman's Homer	44.4	17.7	2.3	2.3	31.1	0.0	2.3
Ode to a Nightingale	52.0	14.0	4.2	3.1	20.1	2.8	3.9
Ode on a Grecian Urn	47.7	15.6	6.9	0.0	23.4	2.3	4.1
Hopkins	53.7	13.2	2.4	3.1	19.7	3.0	4.9
As Kingfisher catch fire	62.7	10.1	0.0	3.3	20.3	0.0	3.3
God's Granduer	61.9	7.9	3.1	7.9	15.8	3.1	0.0
The Windhover	49.2	10.8	4.6	1.5	21.5	6.2	6.2
Binsey Poplars	63.0	12.3	0.0	0.0	16.9	0.0	7.9
Pied Beauty	40.9	13.6	4.5	6.8	25.0	2.3	6.8
Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves	45.5	22.8	3.0	1.0	20.8	2.0	5.0
I wake and feel	61.0	10.2	0.0	3.4	16.9	3.4	5.1
Thou are indeed just	47.2	11.3	3.8	3.8	20.8	7.5	5.7
Donne	51.4	10.4	2.3	1.5	27.3	3.8	4.2
The Canonization	46.6	6.1	2.3	0	35.1	3.1	6.9
Aire and Angels	48.8	15	3.8	1.3	23.8	0	7.5
Breake of Day	61.5	15.3	0	1.9	15.4	5.8	0
A Veldiction: of weeping	51.3	15.3	1.4	0	25	1.4	5.6
Loves Alchymie	54.4	8.9	3.8	2.5	20.3	5.1	5.1
The Flea	50.7	6.8	4.1	1.4	31.5	2.7	2.7
Holy Sonnet 2	45.9	8.1	5.4	0	35.1	2.7	2.7
4	57.4	6.4	4.3	2.1	23.4	4.3	2.1
6	52.5	14.8	0	3.3	21.3	4.9	3.3
7	46.4	10.7	3.6	1.8	30.4	3.6	3.6
9	32.6	13	2.2	2.2	34.8	10.9	4.3
10	55.3	4.3	2.1	2.1	27.7	8.5	0
14	55.6	6.7	4.4	0	26.7	6.7	0
17	64.7	7.8	0	0	23.5	0	3.9
Hymn to God my God in my Sickness	51.9	6.2	1.2	1.2	30.7	2.5	6.2

This table will be illustrated by a graph as follows:

The ratio of etymology of the vocabulary



3. Analysis

At a glance it is obvious that Donne has a close resemblance to Milton. Milton prefers words of Classical origin, while Hopkins prefers words of Germanic origin; and Shakespeare has a most balanced diction. It is curious that Keats' diction is similar to Hopkins' rather than those of Donne and Milton. It is quite understandable that Donne's diction is similar to Milton's, because of his education, profession and the subject matters and conceits in his poetry. According to Walton, "he had his first breeding in his Fathers House, where a private Tutor had the care of him, until the tenth year of his age; and, in his eleventh year, was sent to the University of Oxford; having at that time a good command both of the French and Latine Tongue." (23) Donne has a high ratio of words of Greek origin as Milton does, however, "his youthful training seems to have included little or no Greek." (Bald 40) The only words of Greek origin in Donne's poems are these: *angel*, *air*, *sphere*, *scene*, and *dévil*. Such words are used repeatedly in some poems. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that the Greek influence is negligible in his diction.

He uses many conceits in quite unexpected ways. The comparison between Christian saints and lovers ("The Canonization"); between a compass and lovers ("A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning"), for example,

are as remarkable as effective being the centre of the logic of each poem. A. Alvarez says that "Donne's first and most formative audience was made up of the young, literary, middle-class intellectual elite who, like Donne himself, were to become the leading professional men of the time." (36) They enjoyed Donne's intellectual poems.

First, I will examine "The Canonization". The poet compares the qualifications for love's saints to those for religious saints in the forth stanza:

Wee can dye by it, if not live by love,
 And if unfit for *tombes* and *hearse*
 Our legend bee, it will be fit for *verse* ;
 And if no peece of *Chronicle* wee prove,
 We'll build in *sonnets* pretty roomes ;
 As well a well wrought urne becomes
 The greatest ashes, as halfe—acre tombes,
 And by these hymnes, all shall approve
 Us *canoniz'd* for Love

The lovers-saints conceit has in it important images: the *tomb*, *hearse*, *verse*, *chronicle*, and *sonnets*. These words are of Classical origin. When Donne uses religious conceits, the words of Classical origin tend to be used. Also, in "The Flea" Donne applies words of Classical origin for a conceit. In the second stanza:

Oh *stay*, three lives in one flea spare,
 Where wee almost, yea more then *maryed* are.
 This flea is you and I, and this
 Our *mariage* bed, and *mariage temple* is ;
 Thou *parents* gurdge, and you, w'are met,
 And *cloysterd* in these living *walls* of *Jet*.
 Thou *use* make you *apt* to kill mee,
 Let not to thatm selfe murder *added* bee,
 And *sacrilege*, three sinnes in killing three.

The members comprising the conceit in these lines are: *Thou*, *I* and *blood*. Both *Thou* and *I* are compared to the flea's *blood* and the two groups of blood mingled in the *flea* is our *marriage*; therefore the *flea* is our *marriage temple* as well as our *marriage bed*. Also, taking the religious elements which are Christian images -- i.e. *cloister*, *temple*, *sin*, *sacrilege*--into consideration, it is quite possible to infer that the relation

between the *flea*, *you* and *I* implies the Trinity. Donne prefers words of Classical origin for these images.

If we take Donne's poems, such as those analysed in the graph above, as a whole, a certain feature of his diction becomes noticeable. But when we examine his poems one by one, we find an interesting result. In Milton, Shakespeare, Keats, and Hopkins, common characteristics of their diction appear in each poet's works, whereas, some of Donne's poems have characteristics different from those of diction in other poems. In "Holy Sonnet 9", he prefers words of Classical origin as Milton does; on the other hand, in "Break of Day", he prefers words of Germanic origin as Hopkins does. "Holy Sonnet 9" reads:

If poysonous mineralls, and if that tree,
Whose fruit threw death on else immortall us,
If lecherous goats, if serpents envious
Cannot be damn'd; alas; why should I bee ?
Why should intent or reason, borne in mee,
Make sinnes, else equall, in mee more heinous ?
And mercy being easie, and glorious
To God, in his sterne wrath why threatens hee ?
But who am I, that dare dispute with thee ?
O God? O ! of Thine onely worthy blood,
And my teares, make a heavenly Lethean flood,
And drown in it my sinnes blacke memorie;
That thou remember them, some claime as debt,
I thinke it mercy if thou wilt forget. ("Holy Sonnet 9")

The words of Classical origin are these italicized: *poisonous*, *minerals*, *fruit*, *immortal*, *lecherous*, *serpents*, *envious*, *damn'd*, *intent*, *reason*, *equal*, *heinous*, *mercy*, *easy*, *glorious*, *dare*, *dispute*, *Lethean*, *memory*, *remember*, *claim*, and *debt*, 6 of which are trisyllables, 10 of which are disyllables, 5 of which monosyllables. The choice of Classical words in the first few lines of this poem is reminiscent of the beginning of Milton's *Paradise Lost*:

Of man's first disobedience, and the fruit
If that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste
Brought death into the world, and all our woe,
With loss of Eden. (Book 1)

These two poems have a common theme—i.e. the Original Sin.

According to C. Barber, the influx of French words, most of which derived from Latin is as follows:

“French words tended to spread from London and the court, and locally from the lord’s castle. Moreover, the French words were on the whole not such homely ones Many of the French loan-words reflect this cultural and political dominance: they are often words to do with war, *ecclesiastical matters*, the law, hunting, heraldry, the arts, and fashion.”(146; italics mine)

In both poems is seen a high ratio of words of Classical origin. Taking these examples into consideration, the use of words of Classical origin is closely connected with the religious theme of the poems.

Many words of Classical origin consist of many syllables and are called ‘polysyllables’. “Polysyllabic words are not so ‘English’ as monosyllabic ones for they contain many vowels. These vowels may slacken the neighbouring consonants, but on the other hand, they are suggestive of a feeling of vastness and heaviness.” (Shimane 15). In “Holy Sonnet 9”, Donne prefers to use words of Classical origin because of their characteristics. On account of the number of syllables, and therefore of vowels, they are apt to imply such senses as expansion, breadth, vastness, heaviness, stability and others. The rate of words of Classical origin in the quotation is unusually high, and he takes the advantage of their characteristics.

Contrary to “Holy Sonnet 9”, in “Breake of Day” Donne prefers words of Germanic origin as Hopkins does:

‘Tis true, ‘tis day ; what though it be?
O wilt thou therefore rise from me?
Why should we rise, because ‘tis light?
Did we lie downe, because ‘twas night?
Love which in spite of darknesse brought us hether,
Should in despight of light keepe us together.

Light hath no tongue, but is all eye;
If it could speake as well as spie,
This were the worst, that it could say,
That being well, I faine would stay,
And that I lov’d my heart and honour so,
That I would not from him, that had them, goe.

Must businesse thee from hence remove?
Oh, that’s the worst disease of love,

The poore, the foul, the foule, love can
 Admit, but not the busied man.
 He which hath businesse, and makes love, doth doe
 Such wrong, as when a maryed man doth wooe.

The words of Classical origin are these italicized: *spite, despite, tongue, stay, honour, remove, disease, poor, false, admit, marry*, 7 of which are disyllables, and 4 of which are monosyllables. Donne composes this poem in the colloquial language of his time. Germanic words tend to be words of daily life, while words of Classical origin are often more formal and official. Therefore to suit the theme in "Breake of day" he prefer words of Germanic origin.

Now we should examine Hopkins' "God's Grandeur" which has the highest ratio of Germanic words:

The world is charged with the grandeur of God
 It will flame out, like shining from shook foil
 It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil
 Crushed. Why do men then now not reck his rod ;
 Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;
 And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil ;
 And wears man's smudge & shares man's smell: the soil
 Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.

And for all this, nature is never spent;
 There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;
 And though the last lights off the black West went
 Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs
 Because the Holy Ghost over the bent
 World brood with warm breast & with ah! Bright wings.

The number of the words of Germanic origin is 38, that of Old English origin is 5, that of Middle English origin is 2, that of Old North origin is 5, that of Latin origin is 10, and that of Old French origin is 2. The words of Classical origin are these italicized: *charged, grandeur, flame, oil, Crushed, Generations, toil, soil, nature, spent, and eastward*, one of which is polysyllable, five of which are disyllables, and five of which are thus monosyllables.

Hopkins thus prefers words of Germanic origin. He wants to make the most of their characteristics.

“There are now many monosyllabic words in English and most of them are those derived from Old English or other Germanic languages. . . .almost all have the same or similar phonetic structure : . . . The initial and final sounds are consonants sandwiching a vowel in the middle. The simplest pattern is: consonant + vowel + consonant (CVC). English is a language more of consonants than of vowels. If a poet brings out this *consonant-rich* characteristic in his style, he will be able to create a masculine, rigid and dynamic style.” (Shimane 13). When Hopkins composes poems, he pays the utmost attention to phonetic effect. He does not normally use words of Classical origin to express “a feeling of vastness and heaviness”. In “God Grandeur”, however, *Generations* which is polysyllable is the only exception to express a long time:

Generations have trod, have trod, have trod.

This polysyllable and the thrice repeated expressions “have trod” suggest that the destruction of nature has continued for a long time.

And for all this, *nature* is never *spent*.

The first line of the octet says “nature is never spent”, despite the fact that the destruction of nature continues. *Generations* must mean a long time, in fact human history, in the context of this poem. Thus it is obvious from points both of style and content Hopkins has chosen this polysyllable. It stands out among the monosyllables and disyllables in the sonnet.

In Donne’s “Holy Sonnet 7”, there is an example no less successful than the above:

From death, you *numberlesse infinities*
Of soules, and to your scattred bodies goe,
All whom the flood did, and fire shall o’erthrow,
All whom *warre*, dearth, *age*, *agues*, *tyrannies*,
Despaire, law, *chance* hath slain, . . .

These lines express that the souls are about to return to their bodies on the Doomsday. *Numberlesse*, *infinities*, which are polysyllables, are outstanding in effect in these lines. Donne has chosen these two polysyllables to express the meaning of a large quantity of the souls.

Lastly we examine “Holy Sonnet 2”. Like Book 9 of Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, this sonnet has a high ratio of Classical words:

AS *due* by many *titles* I *resigne*
 My selfe to thee, O God, first I was made
 By thee, and for thee, and when I was decay'd
 Thy blood bought that, the which before was thine;
 I am thy sonne, made with thyselfe to shine,
 Thy *servant*, whose *paines* thou hast still repaid,
 Thy sheepe, thine *Image*, and, till I *betray'd*
 Myself, a *temple* of thy *Spirit divine*;
 Why doth the *devill* then *usurpe* on mee ?
 Why doth he steal, nay *ravish*, that's Thy right ?
 Except thou rise and for thine owne worke fight,
 Oh I shall soon *despair*, when I doe see
 That Thou lov'st mankind well, yet wilt not chuse me,
 And Satan hates mee, yet is loth to lose mee.

But there is a difference in usage of the words of Classical origin between these two poems. "Holy Sonnet 2" has 15 Classical words, none of which is polysyllable, while Book 9 of *Paradise Lost* has 96 Classical words, 36 of which are polysyllables. In *Paradise Lost*, the words of Latin origin are used to express "a feeling of vastness and heaviness". Many polysyllables set the main tune of this great work. However, Donne prefers monosyllabic or disyllabic words regardless of their origin in "Holy Sonnet 2". In this sonnet, *thou*, *thee*, *thy*, and *thine* recur fifteen times. Donne composes this sonnet featuring these monosyllabic repetitions as Hopkins does. Contrary to the general tendency shown by the graph above, in this particular sonnet, Donne prefers basically words of Germanic origin. But sometimes he chooses words of Classical language to express the graveness of the theme.

4. Conclusion

We have proved John Donne is not defined as a poet who prefers both words of Germanic origin like Hopkins or words of Classical origin like Milton. We have seen that Donne changes his diction and style in order to suit best the context of his poems.

In "The Canonization" and "The Flea", Donne prefers words of Classical origin. His ingenious and complex metaphors, which are conceits, and logic, are connected so well with the diction of his poems. We can see that Donne applies words of Classical origin for religious conceits.

In "Holy Sonnet 9", Donne prefers also words of Classical origin to express "a feeling of vastness and heaviness" of the theme—i.e. the Original Sin. The rate of words of Classical origin in "Holy Sonnet

9” is unusually high, and he takes the full advantage of their characteristics. In this sonnet also the usage of words of Classical origin is closely connected with its religious theme.

In “Break of day”, Donne makes better use of words of Germanic origin. The Germanic word tends to be popular and of daily life, while words of Classical origin are often more formal and official. He composes this poem in the colloquial language mainly consisting of Germanic words to suit the theme in this poem.

In “Holy Sonnet 7”, the poet has chosen a few polysyllables among the monosyllables and disyllables to express the feeling of a large quantity of “the souls”.

In “Holy Sonnet 2”, he prefers words of Classical origin which are monosyllabic or disyllabic. He composes this sonnet featuring monosyllabic repetitions as Hopkins does.

The general characteristic of Donne’s diction is shown by the graph above that he prefers words of Classical origin. However, by these examples above, we can see that he also makes good use of Germanic words. Because of this, the nature of his diction is not so much conspicuous compared with Hopkins and Milton. He is interested in constructing a style by taking advantage of words regardless of their etymology. He has composed his poetry carefully to create poetic effects realized in his conceits.

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